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COAPS Comments on Mr. Sherman Kent's memorandum on:

"Security Issue in Publication of the National Budget"

1. Though Mr. Kent's memorandum was entitled "Security Issue in Publication of the National Budget", he addressed himself to the broader question of general publication by the Government as well as by the press and private publishing establishments of unclassified information that might be of material intelligence assistance to our potential enemies. In fact, some of his questions are phrased in such a manner as to go beyond the security issues involved in the publication of the budget.

2. About a year ago the question was raised as to what could be done to plead for the voluntary cooperation of concerns which published scientific and technical material in magazine or book form for public consumption. At that time we found out that a Committee was in existence with membership from the Departments of State and Commerce to attempt to formulate recommendations which might act as a code for the voluntary behavior of outside concerns. They were quite timid about the undertaking lest their efforts would be interpreted as the adoption of a gag rule. At this time no investigation has been made to see what progress has been made, if any, by that Committee.

3. The answers to the key questions raised by Mr. Kent are as follows:

(a) How does the British presentation of the defense budget differ from ours?

After the British departments prepare their estimates in the Fall of each year they are sent to the British Treasury which is headed by a board of five. The substantive questions regarding the content of the estimates are raised by the Treasury. Early in the spring, usually around February, the Treasury sends the budget estimates to Parliament. Between then and August when the Appropriation Act is customarily passed by the Parliament, 24 days are set aside for public debate on the estimates. In such a short allotment of time there is much hopping around from one estimate to another and furthermore, the kinds of questions raised relate to the policy of the departments rather than to the amounts contained in the estimates. No motions may be introduced by Parliament to increase any of the sums set forth in the estimates and a motion to cut is merely a formality or device by which questions of policy are discussed in the open. Accordingly, since there are no detailed presentations in open or in executive sessions before Parliament committees, (because no such committees exist), and since in the 24 day period there

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is no detailed public scrutiny of the amounts in the estimates, the security factors are strengthened by such a system. Thus, as long as a Cabinet agency under the British system secures agreement with the Treasury, they are able to put items into the estimates which will never be scrutinized in Parliament.

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Parliament has two controls over the amounts inserted in the estimates, but even these do not bring the kind of information before public gaze which would jeopardize security.

(1) The Public Accounts Committee. In England is a Comptroller and Auditor General appointed by the Prime Minister who can be removed only by an address (resolution) of both Houses. The Public Accounts Committee reviews the audit that has been made by the Comptroller and Auditor General. This of course is a post facto review to see that the money has been spent in accordance with law.

(2) The Select Committee on Estimates. This Committee of the House of Commons is always under the chairmanship of a member of the opposition party. Even though its purpose is to match to some degree the tremendous power of the Cabinet in putting estimates through, its work is never current, since the examinations they conduct are always a year or two after the event. Realizing that the Parliament debates on the estimates do not get into questions of management and efficiency of the departments, this Committee looks into two or three departments a year, investigating on how efficient the departments are being run, and then reporting to the House its findings which are published as a public report. As in the case of the Public Accounts Committee, this public report has little effect upon questions of security, because of the manner in which the Cabinet officials give the information to the Committee members, and because the items refer to activities which have long since past.

(b) Do the annual reports of the British defense establishment go into as great detail as ours?

There is no annual formal progress report of the British defense establishment. The British budget estimates are published annually in public fashion just like ours, and are equally revealing.

(c) What restraints do members of Parliament exercise in their questions?

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No more than they themselves as men of sagacity and judgment decide upon. The members of Parliament may raise questions at any time regarding the defense establishment which the Minister of Defense can and may refuse to answer. Since the members of Parliament are told only what they get from the Cabinet members, they do not possess the same amount of detailed background material as our members of Congress get from scrutiny of the estimates which we present each year. The British Cabinet has a much tighter rein on the members of its own party in Parliament than the administration here possesses over members of Congress. The members of Parliament do not free-wheel around the British Cabinet agencies, and neither can they call upon Cabinet officials to come to the Parliament to answer questions on their conduct of activities within their agencies.

- (d) Is there an unwritten code followed by British newspapers in regard to defense matters?

No, during World War II the British had the same kind of gentlemen's agreement as existed in the US to publish only certain items and hold off publishing others. This is accomplished by Ministers taking into their confidence persons of repute in the press or publications field.

- (e) How have the British solved the so-called conflict between science and security?

To our knowledge, the British have not found such a solution. They have the same problems confronting them daily, and rely upon the power of the Official Secrets Act to apply penalties when appropriate. Though this is a very rigid Act, it does not seem to possess any more capacity in the security field than our Espionage Act, 50 U. S. Code, under which we operate.

- (f) What information has the British public on new weapons?

The British public gets about the same amount and quality of information as the public of the United States. From time to time information is released after security restrictions are removed from certain types of items.

- (g) In other words, what is the British pattern of security?

The British have their Minister of Home Security who is probably doing no better job than the Attorney General of the United States. And Scotland Yard, even though it has great historical significance, does not claim to accomplish more efficient results than our Federal Bureau of Investigation.

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The British are being daily confronted by some of the same problems in the security field which are constantly plaguing ourselves.

Conclusions:

1. Since the British and American systems of Government have such vast differences, we should not be unduly optimistic in supposing that much benefit can accrue to our pattern of security by examining the British system.
2. Some advantage might be achieved by a comparative study of the manner of preparation and presentation of British and American budget estimates. Maybe the British are able to lump-sum security items better than we are. The US Bureau of the Budget may have already accomplished this examination.
3. We would obtain better results by exerting our ingenuity and our energies on examining the American system as it operates today with a view toward strengthening security weaknesses, and eliminating security hazards.
4. This undertaking should be done collaboratively by the combined leadership of the Director of Central Intelligence who is responsible for protecting intelligence sources and methods and the Director of the FBI who is responsible for all internal security matters.

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